



New York State  
Conservation Council, Inc.

# Grass Roots News

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## IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE

### President's Corner- Chuck Parker

I don't know if you were caught off guard, but I was. While setting up for a sportsmen's show I got the word that Cuomo's gun bill will be law by the end of next week. Yeah, right, I thought; it will be lucky to get out of committee that fast. I enjoyed the weekend, met a lot of people, promoted getting them to join a sportsmen's club. Monday night the Senate signs S2230; Tuesday it is through the Assembly committee process and on the floor. I fall asleep in front of the TV, wake up Tuesday night and see the Governor signing a bill with Sheldon Silver standing on his left side. CRAP!!

The quotes of outrage are immediate. NRA-ILA: "Governor Andrew Cuomo, in stunningly brazen fashion, took a hatchet to gun rights in New York with lightning speed. By cutting secret deals behind closed doors, eliminating public input and circumventing normal legislative processes, the Governor and state Senate passed sweeping anti-gun measures just before the stroke of midnight yesterday. Within 24 hours, Cuomo had his new gun control laws."

Dick Dadey of Citizens Union says the closed-door negotiations followed by immediate votes were unnecessary for a bill in which most measures aren't effective for 60 days.

Democratic and Republican lawmakers complained they saw the bill for only 20 minutes to two hours before they had to vote.

Republicans say Cuomo pushed his bill to passage to boost his own political career.

Cuomo says the scourge of assault weapon violence constitutes a dire emergency and government must act as soon as possible.

We all are saying it ... it is window dressing, not much there that will protect us from gun violence. In many ways it will increase the likelihood that many of us will be victims of a crime. The legal gun owner is the only one who will be affected. You know it; you are hearing it from others, and I will try not to repeat those comments any further.

What I will repeat is the following: I have condemned the actions in Albany for the way some legislation has been addressed in the past. No action on bills with merit, stuck in committee, sometimes for years. The end-of-session madness that plays out as 'give me this and I will get that bill passed' without adequate review by our legislators. Now the Governor rams a bill through, regardless of its merit or our support or opposition, in less than three days. Shame on all involved who did not speak out against the abuse of the democratic process. Was it illegal, no; was it ethical, NO!!!

My son was a Star Wars enthusiast, and I am reminded of a saying that goes something like this: "Luke (Andrew), you have the power to do good -- use it wisely. Don't let the power of evil influence you." Governor Cuomo, you have the power and potential to do great things for the people of the State of New York. Your lack of respect shown here for the people of New York, the window dressing solution that you offered in this legislation, is a sign that you are looking at the dark side of appearance over substance and ignoring what is best for those you represent. You and your advisors missed this one.

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THANK YOU ... The NYSCC thanks those who contributed to this issue of Grass Roots News by providing their perspective on the issue of gun control. This will be an ongoing topic for some time to come.



## GUN OWNERS AND RIGHTS UNDER FIRE

By Bill Conners

On December 14, 2012, anyone listening to the story unfolding at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, had to know there would be an onslaught of anti-gun legislation rising out of the ashes of that tragedy. By January 15, 2013 the die was cast; Governor Andrew Cuomo signed into law the New York Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement Act of 2013. It is the most sweeping and onerous anti-gun legislation in the state's history while at the same time declaring that the Second Amendment is safe.



NYSCC Director-at-Large Raymond Merlotto reacts to announcement by Putnam County Clerk Dennis Sant that FOIL request for list of handgun owners in Putnam County will not be honored. Press conference was held Putnam County's Historic Court House in Carmel, NY on January 3, 2013. Major broadcast and cable news networks covered the announcement, along with many local news organizations.

As a result of the school shooting, honest, law-abiding gun owners have been vilified by the press.

Westchester County's *Journal News* – a Gannett Newspaper - published an interactive map of all of the registered handgun owners in Westchester and Rockland Counties. When the editors and publishers were challenged to justify their decision to disseminate the information, they immediately hid behind the "Freedom of the Press" and the "First Amendment." It begs the question: if the First Amendment is so sacred, how can the Second Amendment be so expendable?

If you have a handgun license in either county, your home appears as a red dot on the map. If the cursor is placed over the dot your name and address appear on the computer screen. This makes the map much like a sophisticated store locator that criminals in the area can use as a handy reference tool, only it is highly unlikely that they will pay for any merchandise they pick up at your place. One home has already been burglarized by someone using the map. Another gun owner had managed to avoid detection by a stalker for several years. Within 48-hours of her name and address being published he had found her and started making harassing phone calls to her.

The *Journal News* – in spite of an unprecedented backlash generated by the publication of the interactive map for Westchester and Rockland Counties – attempted to FOIL the names and addresses of Putnam County gun owners. To his credit, Putnam County Clerk Dennis Sant refused to entertain the FOIL request. The Gannett Company has yet to announce if they have plans to litigate the matter. A soft landing for the company may be to point to the just-passed SAFE Act's provisions that allow people to opt out of having their personal information made public. Gannett could wait for the list to become sanitized and then request it again.

Now New York State has become the epicenter of some of the most onerous of the anti-gun legislation in the country and like it or not, gun owners now have a new set of rules to play by.

But New York's gun owners will not be the only ones feeling the heat. Not wanting to be outdone by the Cuomo administration, Barack Obama is leveraging the unspeakable tragedy at Newtown into a set of Executive Orders and new federal laws that will have far reaching effects; at that level they'll be far beyond anything we have seen to date.



County Clerk Dennis Sant announcing that Putnam County will not comply with FOIL request from Journal News (Gannett Newspapers) for list of names and address of Handgun License holder in Putnam County.  
 Left to right: Dennis Sant, Senator Greg Ball and Assemblyman Steve Katz.

There is little doubt that - given the Congressional penchant for generating sound bites and headlines - gun owners all across the nation will be reeling from a litany of new restrictions imposed on them. What remains to be seen is, will the most restrictive gun laws this country has ever seen actually do anything to combat crime and avert future tragedies, or will they simply strip law-abiding citizens of their Second Amendment rights and make us easy targets for the criminals who are not likely to march into their local police precinct and announce that they are carrying an illegal weapon and ask how they go about getting it registered.

New York's new law is 26,000 words covering more than 50 pages of print. We will have to first see what it says and then try to understand what it means. There will be countless opinions because there are few laws written that are not

unambiguous in meaning. It is the ambiguity that many times leaves the law open to both interpretation and misinterpretation; it is the stuff that court challenges are made of.

In the meantime don't start selling off your collections or be sending your guns to the crusher.

### DERANGED KILLERS, 2ND AMENDMENT RIGHTS & LEGISLATIVE BILLS

From the desk of Bob Brown- Executive Program Director

My heart and sympathies go out to the parents of children in Newtown, Connecticut. I am not ashamed to say that I shed a lot of tears over that tragedy. Although I have no children of my own, my wife and I always attend the local elementary school Christmas program to watch the smiling faces of first and second graders singing their hearts out. This year my great niece was one of those little songsters, and during the performance I could not help but think of all of those little kids in Connecticut who were practicing for their school holiday program but never got to perform. It is so very sad.



I think we can do a better job to make our kids safer. We can find ways, but I do not think the answer is to further restrict the rights guaranteed under the 2nd Amendment of law-abiding citizens to carry firearms. Connecticut is a state with very strict gun laws but that did not stop this deranged killer who violated several firearm laws to commit his crime. I see a three-pronged approach:

Part 1: Laws that keep guns out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill are what we need. We need to look at ways of providing the same quality of care for mental health issues as we do physical health issues for our citizens. Most all of these tragedies appear to be the result of citizens with untreated mental health problems or those who are medicated incorrectly for the mental health issues they have.

Part 2: We have armed security at athletic events and parades. We have armed security in our courtrooms and on our college campuses. We even have armed security in our malls and on our village streets and patrolling our superhighways. In our schools we place our most precious commodity, our children, and put a big sign out front (No Firearms) and provide no armed security. I have to agree with Wayne LaPierre; with 20- year retirement systems there should be lots of former police officers looking for part time work.

Part 3: Most importantly, we need to reestablish a sense of morality within our society. It needs to be a goal of each and every family to teach ethics. I have taught ethics in my hunter training classes for over 45 years and it probably ranks in importance with the 10 points of gun safety. This should also be a goal for the Hollywood film industry and the electronic video game industry as well. Lots of kids play these war games with their friends, where the player's sole objective is to kill as many "enemies" as you can in the shortest amount of time.

HOW COULD THE MAJORITY OF OUR LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVES REACT THE WAY THEY DID? The proper procedure would have been to hold public hearings and have consultations with mental health providers, law enforcement officials and 2nd Amendment experts to form a base of knowledge before enacting legislation. Instead we got feel-good legislation that will erode the basic rights of our country and do little to avoid atrocities.



Our society seems to like a quick fix to its social problems. In times of crisis with looming problems that seem too monumental to solve, we reach a state of panic. This is where the state lawmakers found themselves, and they became vulnerable to a phenomenon known to sociologists as "Group Think." Group think is a term coined by psychologist Irving Janis to describe one process by which a group can make bad or irrational decisions. In a group think situation, each member attempts to conform his or her opinions to what he or she believes to be the consensus. This results in a situation whereby the group ultimately agrees on an action which each member individually might

normally consider to be unwise. Conditions that would encourage group think: ♦ insulation of the group ♦ high group cohesiveness ♦ directive leadership ♦ lack of norms requiring methodical procedures ♦ homogeneity of members' social background and ideology ♦ high stress from external threats with low hope of a better solution than the one offered by the leader(s).

Eight symptoms that are indicative of group think: ♦ illusion of invulnerability ♦ unquestioned belief in the inherent morality of the group ♦ collective rationalization of group's decisions ♦ shared stereotypes outside of group, particularly opponents (probably us) ♦ self-censorship; members withhold criticisms ♦ illusion of unanimity ♦ direct pressure on dissenters to conform ♦ self-appointed "mind guards" protect the group from negative information. THAT IS HOW IT HAPPENED!

WHAT CAN WE DO NOW?

► Senator Kathleen Marchione has a petition to repeal this onerous legislation. Contact her and sign on by writing to 188 State Street, LOB Room 918, Albany NY12247. Phone 518/455-2381 or sign up online at <http://www.nysenate.gov/webform/stand-second-amendment-standing-new-york-state-senator-kathleen-marchione>. ► Respond to your legislators about how you feel about their vote in a letter, email or phone call. ► Write to your Senators and Representatives in Washington before we have a repeat performance.

Do it the right way. I asked Larry Becker, Past President of the NY Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, how he would handle this situation, and here is his reply:

"It is very clear that we will have a variety of bills introduced at both the State and Federal level regarding very strict control, registration, banning, and possible confiscation of guns and ammo. Many, if not all, are going to raise our blood pressure and in some cases cause us to want to lash out at legislators and administrators. It is very important that we first calm down and actually read the proposed legislation and gather facts before we contact anyone, including our friends ... We will not convince anyone that our position is correct by screaming, yelling or threatening. In fact, this will only work against us and confirm (to some) that all gun owners are a bunch of dangerous nuts.



"The answer is we must inform and educate. We must show them through facts and figures how their proposals will not be effective and that we currently have many laws on the books that are either not enforced or the penalties are so weak due to plea bargaining and weak judges that they are basically ineffective. Where appropriate we must point out that many of these proposals will only hurt the law abiding gun owners, and in some cases actually make criminals out of them while not addressing the real problem.

"We have three categories of people we will be dealing with on these issues: (1) those who want a very strict level of gun control and whose opinion we will never change; (2) those who are neutral and may go either way; and (3) those who are pro 2nd Amendment and do not want to see more laws and regulations. In the case of #1, attacking rather than educating will only serve to build a stronger case for them by quoting derogatory or threatening letters as a reason why these new laws are needed. For #2, a well-written or spoken correspondence may convince them that these proposed laws should not be passed. And in the case of #3 they need to have facts at their fingertips and do not need to be wasting time being on the defensive due to derogatory or threatening correspondence. We all need to have our voices heard but we must do it in an informed, fact based non-emotional way.

"If you do not want to make the time to research the bill consider doing this: Inform the representatives that as a responsible, law abiding gun owner you do not want to see guns in the hands of criminals or those who are mentally ill; but more laws (such as the bill in particular that just passed) are not the answer, especially since there is minimal reinforcement and sentencing of the existing laws that we have."

That's all for now. Thanks, Larry, for the advice. Readers -- it's up to you. See you next month.

References

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 Janis, I. & Mann, L. (1977). Decision Making: A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice and Commitment. New York: The Free Press.  
 Schwartz, John & Wald, Matthew L. Smart People Working Collectively can be Dumber Than the Sum of their Brains: "Groupthink" Is 30 Years Old, and Still Going Strong. New York Times March 9, 2003.

**ORLEANS COUNTY FEDERATION OF SPORTSMEN'S CLUBS, INC.**  
 Est. 1938

- Albion Rod & Gun Club
- Barre Sportsmen's Club
- Black North Rod & Gun Club
- Holley Rod & Gun Club
- Junior Wilson Sportsmen Club, Inc.
- Medina Conservation Club
- New York State Bowhunters, Inc.
- Oak Orchard River Chapter, National Wild Turkey Federation
- Orleans County Bluebird Society
- Orleans County Ducks Unlimited
- St. Mary's Archers Club
- S.C.O.P.E.
- Yates-Carlton Sportsmen's Club

**GENESEE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION, INC.**  
*Charles O. Hancock, President*  
 (585) 223-1850 Phone (585) 223-6855 Fax  
[chancock@rochester.rr.com](mailto:chancock@rochester.rr.com) Email

A charitable foundation concerned about conservation issues, with special interest in Genesee, Livingston, and Monroe Counties.



Connor Scott, 14 years old, was a very happy young man when he got a deer this season at Jim Rodman's farm in Madison County. His success came at the same place he got his turkey that was featured in our July 2012 Grass Roots News. Connor is a very nice representation of young hunters, says Brenda Shimer, who submitted this photo. He is careful, excited, and ever respectful to everyone.

### CLUB NEWS

**Glen-Grieg Fish & Game Club** is holding winter trap shoots every Saturday beginning at 12:30 P.M. during the months of January, February and March at the club located on Brantingham Rd., Grieg. The Club is also holding a 50 round winter shoot on April 6 for all winter shooters. For more information contact Jerry Howard at 315/535-7229.

February 2, 2013: **New York State Region 9 Erie County Trappers** Raw Fur Auction at S&S Taxidermy & Archery Pro Shop on Rt. 219 in Springville. Fur check-in 8am, Auction at 10am. Contact: Patti 716/337-2556.

February 8-10, 2013: **Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs of Sullivan County, Inc.** will hold its 6th Annual Coyote Hunt Contest. Entry fees must be postmarked by January 25, 2013. For registration and all the rules of the 3-day Coyote Hunt Contest please contact the Federation Coyote Hunt Secretary, Kay Danchak, 122 Jaketown Road, Swan Lake, NY 12783 or call Kay or Jack @ 845/482-4987. For any further information call Pat Voges @ 631/968-8210. For an application download from our website: [www.sullivancountysportsmensfederationny.com](http://www.sullivancountysportsmensfederationny.com)

March 2: **Wyoming/Genesee County Pheasants Forever Chapter 843** will be hosting the annual banquet at the Alexander Fire Hall, 2468 Route 98, Attica. Doors open at 5:30. Please contact Tom Kelsey at 585/591-0609 or 585/993-6120.

March 2 & 3: **Schroon Lake Fish & Game Club**, PO Box 725 Schroon Lake, NY 12870, will hold the 21st Annual Ice Fishing Derby, beginning at daylight Saturday until 4PM Sunday. Entry forms will be available at Flanagan's, Bobcat Sports and the Club through March 1. You can also pre-register by mail by sending a check payable to SL Fish & Game Club with a PRINTED list of entrants' names, addresses and phone numbers. For information or to confirm mail-in registrations, contact Drew 518/532-7953.

## THANK YOU!

### BUCK A MEMBER DONORS:

**New York Walleye Association, Inc.**, Buffalo \* **Rapids Rod & Gun Club**, Cheektowaga  
**Sauquoit Creek Fish & Game**, Clayville \* **Trumansburg Fish & Game**, Trumansburg  
**Waterloo Rifle & Pistol Club**, Waterloo

### MATCHING BAM!

*Livingston County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs in Leicester has generously donated matching funds for all contributions made to NYSCC by its member clubs in 2012. Livingston County challenges other federations to do likewise for 2013*

### GENERAL DONATIONS:

Glen Adams, LeRoy\* Mike & Krys Elam, Albion

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## FEBRUARY IS ICE FISHING MONTH IN SCHOHARIE COUNTY

Every Saturday during the month of February there will be a youth ice fishing derby held in Schoharie County, each hosted by a different group (weather and ice permitting, of course). The first three derbies will be held at the Franklinton Vlaie Wildlife Area off State Route 145 in the Town of Broome. On February 2 the first derby will be hosted by the Schoharie County Conservation Association. The second Saturday, February 9, West Fulton Rod and Gun Club will sponsor. On the third Saturday, February 16, the Wildlife Society Chapter at SUNY Cobleskill will host. The fourth derby will be presented by the Richmondville Fish and Game Club, to be held at either Bear Gulch or Fancher Pond in the Town of Summit. Children under the age of 12 may enter free and are eligible for prizes and trophies.

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## SUNY COBLESKILL'S CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY'S TRIP TO MONTEZUMA

By: Vinnie Johnson

SUNY Cobleskill has long supported a Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Those students involved in the Fisheries and Wildlife Department of the school run the chapter, but it is open to the entire student population. The TWS club is all about encouraging its members to be active in State and National Wildlife Society meetings and events as well as being more active in community environmental education. The club sends students to the State Wildlife Society meetings as well as the National TWS meeting where they can make contacts with other schools and professionals in the field. Another large part of the club is community outreach; members run the Fish and Wildlife Festival in Cobleskill, NY, every April. As the biggest club event, this Festival involves many vendors and wildlife associated groups to teach the public about the environment.



In the fall of 2012 the TWS club at Cobleskill took a trip to the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge in Seneca Falls, NY. Montezuma is the most well known migratory bird site in the state and is host to many rare species of birds. Club members met with the Finger Lakes Community College TWS students at Montezuma; this was a great experience for both clubs to interact and get to know each other. The Finger Lakes TWS group came with a professor who has worked at and provided a guided tour of the refuge. The trip was a great experience because almost all the students were first timers at the refuge, and most were not confident birders. It was a great way to teach those new students about birding and how to identify different types of birds. On the trip students saw a wide variety of birds such as bald eagles, a peregrine falcon, sandhill cranes, shovellers, geese, swans and many more. The trip was a huge success because of all the new species of birds that were seen and how much each person enjoyed being there even though it was a cold, rainy day. Montezuma is one of the most amazing places in New York State; if you haven't been there you should go visit; we loved it.

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Anthony Celano, age 15, is the winner of the Sullivan County Long Beards Annual Youth Big Buck Contest for 2012. He shot a 145 lb, 7 pointer on October 6, 2012, while accompanied by Butch Kortright, President of the Sullivan County Long Beards chapter of NYS NWTF and Valerie Luddemann, owner of Val's Guns in Livingston Manor. Celano used a 30-06 Remington to bag his deer, and his prize was a bolt action Savage Camo .22 250. Anthony also received a free mount from Tim Kautz of TK Taxidermy on Route 52 in Youngsville.



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## LAST CALL FOR 2013 RESOLUTIONS

This notice constitutes official call for resolutions for the NYSCC for 2013. All resolutions should be sent to the NYSCC Office by **February 1, 2013**. The Council office address is 8 East Main Street, Ilion, NY 13357-1899. It would be of great help to the Committee if resolutions were submitted early; any resolutions not in the proper form and received by the February 1 deadline will be rejected.

County and Associate members may submit two resolutions, and Affiliate groups may submit one. Each organization submitting a resolution should investigate its facts thoroughly. Be very specific as to what is being requested along with reference to any law, order, policy or regulation. In addition, the resolution should contain reference to who should perform the action requested and by what means (law change, Department order change, request for action, etc.).

### Of statewide significance –

#### To benefit the sportsmen of New York State

By Stephen Wowelko, Chairman, NYSCC Resolution Committee

The resolution process for 2013 is in full swing. As the February 1 deadline approaches, here are some suggestions to help you along in the process.

All resolutions for consideration through NYSCC should be to establish or change a position or policy for the New York State Conservation Council on a matter concerning issues of state-wide significance.

The **title** of the resolution should clearly reflect the intent.

In formulating the resolution, the “**Whereas**” statements should provide the basic facts and reasons for the resolution. The information should be specific, and provide answers to such questions as: Why is the change necessary? What are the facts leading to the final request? It should provide or reference statistics and the effect of the issue. What is the rationale for the “resolved” course of action?

The “**Be It Resolved:**” should clearly spell out what it is you wish to achieve.

The primary purpose of a resolution is to delineate a position for the New York State Conservation Council on a matter not otherwise covered concerning policies, principles, or precedent of state-wide significance. Resolutions are policy declarations and are not meant to solve local problems unless all other avenues of remedy have been exhausted on the local level.

The final submitted resolution should be polished, well thought out and not a draft work in progress.

The resolutions are to be submitted by the organization’s official councilman to the NYSCC. Resolutions coming from other individuals or directly from Federation clubs will not be accepted. The resolution should contain contact information for the councilman – name, address, phone number and email address. The councilman will be the primary contact for any questions the Resolution Committee may have about the resolution.

Resolutions are due at the NYSCC main office by **February 1, 2013**. It is preferred that they be sent electronically to [nyscc@nyscc.com](mailto:nyscc@nyscc.com) or if the councilman does not have email access it may be sent on paper through the US Post Office to the following address:

**NYSCC (Resolutions)**  
**8 East Main Street**  
**Ilion, NY 13357-1899**

## SUCCESSFUL REGION 9 FUNDRAISER

By Gene Pauszek, writing for the Dunkirk Observer

An estimated 80 sportsmen and sportswomen attended a fundraiser to benefit the NYS Conservation Council held at the Southtowns Walleye Association Inc. in Hamburg on December 15, 2012. Several thousand dollars was raised to assist the group of volunteers who spend their time coming to the aid of fellow NY sportsmen.

Few people realize that the NYSCC has been around since 1933 and was created by sportsmen and conservationists to secure and manage our natural resources for future generations, as well as to protect the rights of sportsmen to hunt, fish, trap and to own firearms.

Here are just a few of the accomplishments the NYSCC over the last 79 years: The NYSCC helped change EnCon law to allow 14-15-year olds to hunt big game with a rifle or shotgun; established through EnCon law a junior muzzleloading license for the same age group to participate in special muzzleloading seasons; helped alter EnCon law to allow a person over the age of 21 to take a 12-13-year old youth small game hunting. The same was done for trapping.

Many of us take it for granted, but the NYSCC helped create separate archery and firearms seasons, worked to get a separate season to allow the taking of big game with archery equipment, and have separate game tags for archers as well as allow them to use DMP tags during archery season.

It was NYSCC that helped get legislation allowing the use of rifles during gun season in parts of central and western NY. The group also worked to get special early youth hunts for turkey, deer, waterfowl and pheasant. NYSCC secured passage of the law establishing the "Hunters Helping the Hungry" program, whereby meat from legally harvested deer may be donated to food programs for the needy. Today, the effort has become a state-funded program called the Venison Donation Coalition.

The NYSCC also has requested or recommended season lengths or bag limits for game birds and animals to protect them from over-harvest, also setting opened and closed seasons as well as creel limits on fish to protect them during spawning seasons. It helped with acquisition of easements along streams throughout the state. Under NYSCC leadership 17,000 acres of buffer lands were opened for hunting around upstate reservoirs acquired by New York City, access gained to land in the Adirondacks, and the state acquired lands suitable for reforestation and parks. The NYSCC opposed the ban on .50 caliber firearms as well as worked for the passage of the "Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act." In addition, members worked with DEC to restore many game and non-game animals and birds.

The current president of the NYSCC, Chuck Parker, addressed the attending assembly and stated, "NYSCC is a dedicated and educated group of individuals representing the sportsmen's interest in New York State and our surrounding communities. There are other groups that represent us on a national level, but NYSCC is dedicated to our area and the rest of the state."

Various comments from attendees stated that Parker and his crew have a good working relationship with the DEC. Let us continue to help them so they can do their best to support us, because we are going to need all the help we can get!



OBSERVER Photo by Gene Pauszek  
Pictured L-R are Zen Olow, newly appointed president of the Western New York Environmental Federation; Dan Tone, outgoing President and current Director; Chuck Parker, President of the NYS Conservation Council; Dave Barus, Erie County representative; Joe Fischer, WNYEF Treasurer; Dave Kern Sr., Vice President; and David Woodworth, President of the Southtowns Walleye Association Inc.

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## RECENT SHOOTINGS AND THE CALL FOR GUN CONTROL

By John Cushman

*John Cushman is President of the Sportsmen's Association for Firearms Education (SAFE). He formerly served as Director and Firearms Committee Chair for the NYSCC and is currently a Director of the National Rifle Association.*



In the wake of the school shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, and the ambush of firefighters in Webster, NY, it is impossible to comprehend the full scope of these tragedies and the lasting damage to the affected families and communities.

As law abiding gun owners we are just as incensed and frustrated; and we abhor the senseless and violent acts that harm our fellow human beings, especially innocent children. There have been many statements condemning firearms and lawful gun owners as a result of these events. But the acts were of individuals with deranged behavior, not those of decent and law abiding people who own guns and respect life.

From my perspective this is a "here we go again" situation. Once more we see the results of a gun free school zone law. What would the outcome have been had one or two teachers been carrying a concealed firearm? Legislators have instead provided a playing field favoring criminals who never obey laws to begin with and then take advantage of gun free school zones, knowing that only law abiding citizens will obey these stupid laws. Once again, our legislators have blood on their hands for legislating that responsible people who legitimately carry concealed firearms and who could have made a difference are not allowed to do so. Well done, legislators -- at all levels of government -- for once again failing to provide what the people really need ... the ability to defend themselves and their families.

Many laws were broken during the sad event in Newtown. I believe the perpetrator fully intended to die during the commission of his attack, and thus had no regard for the consequences of his actions. Had there been more laws in place, the outcome would have been no different. As has been noted time and again, prohibitive laws only restrict the law abiding.

On the same day we suffered this attack on our children, a similar attack occurred at a primary school in China, a nation not known as a bastion of freedom. Lacking access to firearms, the criminal used a knife to injure some 20 children. Having a sworn obligation to defend the founding documents of this country, all legislators and public officials should resist the emotional rush to action in favor of analytical reflection on recent events and current laws.

Unfortunately it is the media that is pushing for a gun control solution by constantly giving the anti-gun fanatics the microphone while avoiding all of the millions of good, honest, law abiding citizens. I have long said that when you try to reason with the anti-gun fanatics the anger they show is so extreme that if a gun was between you and them they would grab the gun and shoot you. Ask yourself who is really violence prone, the law abiding gun owners or the advocates of gun control? Then ask yourself who is actually spewing out the hate speech. This is a sad time, and Americans are understandably seeking answers as to why. However, to second-guess an ongoing criminal investigation by suggesting that additional gun laws or restrictions on lawful citizens might have made a difference is not only a rush to judgment, but it is irresponsible.

The first recorded school murders in the U.S. took place in 1764 near Greencastle, PA. Four Lenape Indian warriors killed the schoolmaster and at least 9 children. School murders have occurred periodically for a very long time in the U.S. and in many other countries around the world. Motives are sometimes political, racial, or religious, but are most often personal issues harbored by a criminally insane perpetrator. How can we prevent these troubled people from committing these unbelievably

heinous acts? The first response from many is that we must limit access to guns, for they are the most common tool used in these crimes. It is easy to say (and many want to believe) that simply removing guns from the hands of private citizens would solve the problem once and for all. Not really!

If we could wave a magic wand and make every firearm not in the possession of the authorities disappear instantly, would those obsessed with mass murder be stopped in their tracks? Or would they pursue different methods to the same end, such as bombs, like the ones Andrew Kehoe used to kill 38 in the Bath, MI school disaster; or knives, like a jilted teenage boy in China used in the summer of 2012 to kill nine people; or an automobile, like Priscilla Ford used to kill 6 and injure 26 in Reno; or arson, like Julio Gonzalez used to kill 87 in New York in 1990? Any number of other strategies could be utilized by someone bent on mass killing. Clearly, the possibilities are endless, and circumstances favorable to the creation of deadly scenarios are common. It is a fallacy to think that even a total removal of all privately held firearms would eliminate opportunities for deranged persons to commit mass murder. On the other hand, such a removal would preclude any law-abiding citizen from using a firearm for self defense, or the defense of others, as was done recently in Early, TX, where a citizen used his revolver to save the life of a police officer. Similarly, a mother in Loganville, GA, shot an intruder to protect herself and her 9-year-old twins. Disarmed citizens are at the mercy of criminals, who by definition ignore gun laws just as they do any other law they find inconvenient. Based on the experience of jurisdictions where guns have been banned, it's certain that we would see a net increase in the number of victims, not a reduction.

Since we know that schools are magnets for homicidal sociopaths and terrorists, we must recognize that our children must be safeguarded the way we guard everything else we value highly. We employ armed security at banks, malls, factories, even parking lots. This is the only option we have that can make a positive difference. We should seriously consider proposals like the 2006 legislation Rep. Frank Lasee introduced in Wisconsin to arm teachers. "To make our schools safe for our students to learn, all options should be on the table," he said. "Israel and Thailand have well-trained teachers carrying weapons and keeping their children safe from harm. It can work in Wisconsin." Whether it's armed teachers and administrators, or police officers assigned to school duty, it's time to install effective security measures at all our schools, including strict controls on access to the premises that can't be defeated by simply breaking a window as was done at Sandy Hook; and most importantly, on-site personnel prepared to fight to defend our kids if need be.

The Sportsmen's Association for Firearms Education (SAFE) sends heartfelt sympathies to the families of the victims, and the entire communities of Newtown, CT, and Webster, NY. You will remain in our thoughts and prayers throughout this ordeal and beyond.

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